

Antonio J. Triay House  
42 Spanish Street at Cuna Street  
St. Augustine  
St. Johns County  
Florida

HABS No. FLA-141

HABS

FLA.

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. FLA-141

ANTONIO J. TRIAY HOUSE

Address: 42 Spanish Street at Cufia Street, St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida. HABS  
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Present Owner: Robert Miller Hall.

Present Occupant: Robert Miller Hall and wife.

Present Use: Residence and handicraft shop ("La Caleta").

Statement of Significance: The Triay House is one of a limited number of St. Augustine houses that remain from the town's second Spanish Period (1784-1821).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The following historical data was compiled (c. 1961) by Mrs. Doris C. Wiles and Mrs. Eugenia B. Arana of the St. Augustine Historical Society, 22 St. Francis Street, St. Augustine, Florida:

A. Original and Subsequent Owners:

When the Spaniards evacuated Florida in 1763, Elixio de la Puente was assigned to dispose of all private property. He made a map in 1764 plotting every house. He gave each one a number and also made a list of property owners to identify them with each house.

This map identified the lot in which the Triay house now stands in Square F, Lot 94, owned by the heirs of Don Manuel Escalona, measuring North-South 35 varas, East-West 75 varas, and having a tabby house on the site.

Puente was able to sell some property but turned the unsold houses and lots over to Jesae Fish, a resident of St. Augustine.

Mr. Fish must have acquired this property, as the Monterief Map of 1765 shows all of the Block owned by Mr. Fish. However, the account books of Mr. Fish do not divulge any information pertaining to this property.

In 1777 colonists from the Turnbull settlement in New Smyrna took refuge in St. Augustine. Shortly thereafter Governor Patrick Tonyn allotted property in this section of St. Augustine to the refugees and it was called the Greek settlement. Many of these destitute people built shelters for themselves and their families on British Crown land. After Florida was returned to Spanish rule in 1783 this

land became the property of the Spanish Crown. Later in 1790-1791, Crown land was sold at public auction, and many of the occupants of these houses purchased the land on which they had built.

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Two years before this auction took place, the Crown appointed Mariano de la Rocque, a military engineer, to plot another map of the town showing ownership by St. Augustinians and all Crown property.

The Rocque Map listed on Block 11, Lot 73, a timber frame house, in bad condition, with palm thatch roof and owned by Juan Triay; lot owned by the King.

In 1790, Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, governor of Florida, prepared to sell at public auction those houses that were property of the Crown. A list was prepared showing the houses and lots and the appraisal price. The numbers of this list did not correspond to the Rocque Map but could be easily identified with the map by description.

The Quesada List designated in Block 17, No. 142, "a house of palm of Juan Triay, in lot of the King, bounding on the East [sic] with Pedro Trope, on the North [sic] by Juan Pomar; its measurements on the front N-S 16 varas and in depth E-W 10 varas, that at the rate of one "quartillo" per square vara amounts to 40 reales."

Juan Triay died before titles of properties were issued by Governor White. On August 12, 1803, his widow, Antonia Tudorina, petitioned the governor for permission to sell this property. She claimed that the house had deteriorated to the extent that it was uninhabitable and that according to Royal Decree she either had to build or sell, and she being a poor woman was unable to build. Therefore, she begged His Excellency for permission to sell (Escrituras 1803, p. 335).

Permission must have been granted, as on December 30, 1803 she sold the property to Gabriel Triay for his son Antonio who was living in Havana at the time. Governor White, in turn, approved the transfer of title to Antonio J. Triay. (Escrituras 1803, p. 334).

In 1806, Governor White confirmed title to Antonio Triay of Lot 142, Block 17, "which was left in possession of Juan Triay (now deceased) who built on it a wooden house by permission of the Government. Antonia Tudorina, widow of Juan, sold to Gabriel Triay, father of Antonio (then absent) December 30, 1803. Lot measures N-S 16 varas, E-W 10 varas. Bounded N [sic] by Juan Pomar, S [sic] by street leading to Tolomato, making a corner with that and Spanish Street

which is E boundary; W by Pedro Trope." (Escrituras 1806, p. 200).

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Clements Survey - 1834 - Claimant: Antonio J. Triay

Subsequent

Owners:

- 1847 September 29, 1847 Antonio Alvarez, Administrator of the estate of Antonio J. Triay and Catalina Triay, his widow TO Barto. Pacetti and B. Antonio Triay. Note: Antonio J. Triay died intestate and childless leaving his sister Micaela Triay, wife of said Barto Pacetti and B. Antonio Triay, his brother, his lawful heirs. (Deed of Partition - Book FF, p. 19 - St. Johns County Records)
- 1879 April 11, 1879 Mary Gomez, daughter and heir of Micaela Triay Pacetti, et. al. TO Mercedes Triay, widow of B. Antonio Triay. (Deed Book Y, p. 177 - St. John County Records)
- 1885 October 21, 1885 Mercedes Triay TO John G. Long (Quit Claim Deed - St. John County Record)
- 1907 January 24, 1907 Sarah C. Quigley, sister of John G. Long, and Florence C. Pomar, daughter of Sarah and niece of John G. Long TO James L. Colee (Will Book A, pp. 155-163 - St. Johns County Records)
- 1908 January 3, 1908 James L. Colee and Georgia, his wife, TO S. Ewing Smith (Deed Book 13, p. 154 - St. Johns County Records)
- 1924 April 2, 1924 F. Lund Ewing, heir at law of S. Ewing Smith TO Edward Hogarth and wife Emma Louise Hogarth (Deed Book 52, p. 199 - St. Johns County Records)
- 1950 January 31, 1950 Marie Collins Hogarth TO St. Augustine Historical Society and Institute of Science. (Deed Book 23, p. 180 - St. Johns County Rcds.)

Note: All of the above changes of titles and the documented research on this property were made by Mrs. Doris C. Wiles in the St. Johns County Records and in the Spanish documents cited, copies of which may be found in the library of the St. Augustine Historical Society.

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- B. Date of Erection: Second Spanish Period - after 1803.
- C. Builder: Probably Antonio J. Triay
- D. Notes on Reconstruction:

On January 27, 1950, the St. Augustine Historical Society's Board of Directors met in Executive Session and authorized purchase of the Triay House from Marie Hogarth (colored) via the James A. Colee Agency. The motion was made by J. P. Davis and the purchase price was \$3,500.

F. A. Hollingsworth, local architect, was retained to make measured drawings of the building and additions before demolition work could proceed. Mr. Hollingsworth completed this phase of his work on September 12th.

Modern additions to the house were removed, structurally unsound portions were rebuilt and strengthened, and the house was finished in line with the best evidence of its original appearance.

Two concessions to the modern were made. The north doorway (which was originally a window) was retained as the main entrance to the house, in order to eliminate the hazard from traffic contingent upon use of the east doorway, which opens directly upon the street. The upstairs south room was partitioned to provide a bathroom.

By July of 1951, work on the Triay House was completed except for a few minor details. The patio wall was finished in October of the same year. A modest landscaping program was undertaken.

As of November 13, 1951, the Society had invested \$15,582.96 in the property, in addition to the purchase price of \$3,500. About \$600 was still due various suppliers at this time.

#### DEMOLITION

Demolition involved the following additions (modern) to the old walls of the original building:

North elevation - two-story addition of clapboard and concrete block construction. The north wall (first floor) of this addition was concrete block. The second story consisted of a porch entered from the second-floor northeast room.

West elevation - a two-story clapboard modern addition was removed. The upper floor section served as a bathroom, and the first floor was used as a kitchen.

### CONSTRUCTION

The old stucco was removed from the exterior walls of the building to determine the condition of the coquina and to aid in the search for any changes made to the original design.

The south wall proved to be in poor condition. Both window frames had to be rebuilt. The wooden lintels were replaced with reinforced concrete. Loose stones were removed and relaid. The west half of the wall, which had, due to lack of a suitable foundation, taken a southward lean several inches off plumb, was demolished and relaid on a new concrete foundation. The coquina cap on top of the wall was repaired.

The east wall. First-floor openings were repaired by using concrete lintels. The wooden originals suffered from dry rot and termites. In addition, the openings were restored to their original functions by reversing the positions of the south door (modern) with the center window opening (evidence clearly showed the doorway formerly centered between the two windows). Loose stone was relaid. The original wooden lintels over the second-story window openings were in good condition. It was found necessary to tie the east wall into both the north and south walls, at the point of intersection, with steel reinforcing, as the bond between them had been ruptured by traffic vibration.

The north wall. The brick chimney was pointed up. The first- and second-floor openings were restored to their intended use. All of them had been enlarged to doorways giving onto the modern wooden additions. Openings were filled in to sill height with coquina. However, the first-floor west opening was retained as a doorway. Present-day auto traffic prohibited the use of the original door opening directly onto the Spanish Street curb. Lintels were replaced with poured concrete. The coquina cap, used as trim on top of the wall, was repaired.

The west wall was in the worst structural condition. The south end was razed and relaid on a new foundation. The old foundation was composed of loose oyster shell. The first course of stone did not have a flat bearing surface on the ground face, but had modified V contour. This was one of the major factors contributing to the cracked condition of this section of the wall. The other factor was the lack of any tie with the interior of the house due to the stair well.

The upper half of this wall was rebuilt using modern concrete block, laid on a belt of reinforced concrete atop the relaid coquina, over the protest of President David R. Dunham, who preferred the use of coquina, as other members of the

Board felt that the expense involved in the use of coquina stone was not justified in a wall where the stone work would be hidden by stucco and plaster.

This section of the wall was anchored to the main body of the house by means of an iron hook anchored in the wall with the inboard end of the iron bolted to the balcony floor joists. The inside end of the joists were recessed (original construction) into the main wall of the house and held there by the weight of the coquina story above.

The north section of the wall was partially taken down and relaid with coquina and concrete block. The modern transom above and left of the first-floor window was filled with stone. A concrete lintel was poured over the lower window, and the frame rebuilt. The window directly above was also replaced. Loose stones were removed and relaid. The wooden plate connecting the two separate sections of the west wall was replaced with a new beam of approximately the same dimensions.

Roof. The tar paper roof covering was removed and replaced with a hot mopped felt and asbestos-cement shingle (Johns-Manville No. 640). The roof sheathing had been recently repaired by a former owner and was sound. Original rafters were in excellent condition with the exception of the extension rafters over the stair well and northwest room, second floor. The rafters were replaced using the old as patterns in the construction of the new.

Balcony. The balcony flooring and joists were in good shape. A concrete floor was poured on the first-floor entrance (west) and northwest room, since there was evidence of a tapia floor in the early construction.

#### CONSTRUCTION (Interior)

First floor: Northeast room. Living Room. (Since restoration used as a shop).

Ceiling was covered with beaver board, a paper composition board. This was removed revealing the ceiling beams. Due to the decorative bead running along the bottom edges it was believed that they were originally exposed to view. There was evidence of lath and plaster having been used prior to the beaver board. Nails were removed, and the beams left in their natural condition were exposed to view.

The fireplace was repaired. Modern fire brick replaced the burnt-out original red clay bricks.

Plaster on walls and partitions was poorly bonded. Removal was necessary. This action revealed the original construction and modern alterations. The wooden partition between

the northeast and southeast rooms was retained in its original condition. The hand-rived laths were sound. Some renailing was required. The walls were repointed and replastered to duplicate the original steel-floated white lime finish. This technique was duplicated in the treatment received by the southeast room, with the exception of a small patch on the north wooden partition and the south coquina wall which was left unplastered to permit inspection by interested persons.

Concrete floors were installed by a former owner, in the northeast and southeast rooms. While not old they were in harmony and serviceable. A matching concrete floor was poured in the west section of the first floor, under the stairway, and the northeast room. The hot-water heater was installed in this room. Water pipes are carried along the west wall up against the balcony floor joists. A false beam covers the lines. There was evidence of a tapia floor under the stairway about six inches lower than the present concrete floor.

The stairway was reinforced and repainted. An attempt was made to match the original color.

#### Second floor

Wooden flooring on balcony was removed, floor beams straightened, then relaid. Northwest room walls were replastered. The wooden partition forming the south wall of this room was retained. Hand-rived laths were also left intact on the partition.

Northeast room: Living room.

Ceiling removed due to physical condition. Ceiling beams were sound. Rock lath replaced the original wooden lath. The plaster rosette in the ceiling was restored. Plaster removed from all walls which were then repointed and replastered. The original pine floor was sanded and varnished. The fireplace was repaired. Fire brick was used in the fireplace to replace the worn original clay brick. The hearth was rebuilt and relaid. Charred wooden members were found. Early builders were careless in the use of wood adjacent to a fireplace. This could account for the loss by fire of so many of our old houses. All interior window trim replaced due to bad condition of the old.

Southeast room: Bedroom.

Walls and ceilings replastered. Pine floor refinished. A partition was erected in the west end of this room to provide



a bathroom. A small window opening was cut through the west (coquina) wall to provide light and ventilation. The placement of the bath here and the kitchen in the northwest room, while modern intrusions, made the house livable by today's standards.

The following is the text of the marker placed on this house in 1960:

#### THE TRIAY HOUSE

This is a typical Minorcan home, built and occupied by a member of the Triay family during the early 1800's. They were among the colonists, brought from the island of Minorca to New Smyrna in 1768. Nine years later they sought sanctuary in Saint Augustine and were allotted lands here by the British Crown.

Restored by the Saint Augustine  
Historical Society in 1951.

1960

Edited by John C. Poppeliers  
Architectural Historian  
April 1965.

### PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

#### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Triay House is a good example of a simple, restored, two-story coquina masonry structure in St. Augustine.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

#### B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories, bays; over-all dimensions, layout--shape: Two stories, 3 x 3 bays, approximately 27' (front) x 27', almost square shape.
2. Foundations: Coquina blocks. Note: "Coquina" is a local shellstone quarried on nearby Anastasia Island and used for construction in St. Augustine since 1580.
3. Wall construction, finish: Coquina masonry blocks laid in roughly horizontal courses. Plastered both inside and out. Interior partitions are of frame construction with lath and plaster.
4. Porches: partially open rear (west) two-level loggia. It is now screened in.

5. Chimneys: One exterior plastered coquina masonry chimney on the north side. HABS  
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6. Openings:
- a. Doors and doorways: Six-paneled wooden doors (restored) set in simple masonry openings (plaster reveals) with simple molded wooden frames. The only exception to this is the double door (east, formerly main entry) that has three panels per unit.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Generally six-over-nine-light, double-hung wooden sash (restored); wooden shutters (board and batten).
7. Roof:
- a. Shape, covering: Gable with rear "salt-box lean-to"; asbestos shingling.
  - b. Eaves: Flush eaves with copper gutter (restored) on east and west sides; low simple parapet on north and south gable ends.

C. Description of Interior

1. Plan: The plan of the Triay House is a variation of the loggia type "St. Augustine plan," a term used by Albert Manucy in his book The Houses of St. Augustine, 1565-1821 (St. Augustine, Florida: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1962). He briefly defines this terminology on p. 55:

"It is essentially a simple rectangle of from two to four rather spacious rooms, with a loggia or a porch, and often a street balcony.

"Actually, this plan is found in two forms. The more popular one has a loggia (open-sided room) as an integral part of the plan, centered on the side. The other version substitutes a sheltered porch for the loggia. In both cases, the main entrance was through either the loggia or porch, which opened into the yard."

A plan and elevation similar in most details to that of the Triay House is illustrated on p. 57, figure D (and also on p. 76, figure J).

2. Stairways: In the southwest corner of the house - and an integral part of the loggia - is a wooden staircase that is wider than usual in St. Augustine domestic

structures of the same period. This open-string, winder, left-hand stairway has molded wooden handrails, wooden balusters (rectangular in section; two per tread), and turned wooden newel posts. Below the staircase, at the ground level, is an enclosed storage space with a paneled wooden door.

3. Flooring: The first floor is concrete, except the loggia which has imitation tabby. The second floor has random-width boarding, mainly finished with linseed oil (some stained or shellaced). The kitchen floor has a linoleum covering over the boarding.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first-floor ceiling has exposed beams and flooring. All other ceilings and walls are of plaster painted white.
5. Doors and doorways: Generally the doors are wooden and six-paneled (restored); the frames are simple molded wooden frames.
6. Decorative features: Exterior openings have simple wooden trim with backband splayed reveal; the interior has simple wooden trim. A later 19th century wooden mantel has carpenter's details, pilasters, and rosette block.
7. Notable hardware: Common 19th century functional hardware (also some reproductions).
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Two fireplaces.

D. Site

1. Orientation: Main facade (east) fronts on Spanish Street.
2. A large concrete terrace on north (Cuna Street) side of house for parking. An enclosed garden area, brick paved, is at the rear (west). There is an early coquina masonry well in this garden; the planting is informal, and there is a small grass plot. The house itself is at the curb line of Spanish Street.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards, Architect  
and

John C. Poppeliers, Architectural  
Historian  
National Park Service  
August 1961, and March 1965.